

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 36

INTRODUCED BY D. KOTTEL

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY OF HOW TO ENHANCE ECONOMIC SECURITY OF MONTANANS THROUGH FAMILY ASSET BUILDING, EDUCATION IN HOME OWNERSHIP AND PERSONAL FINANCE, AND DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL BUSINESSES.

WHEREAS, the current economic conditions in the country and this state have increased unemployment to a seasonally adjusted 5.6% in January 2009 from a low of 3.3% in 2006, a situation aggravated, in part, by national conditions related to home mortgage problems, misuse of credit, and lack of personal savings; and

WHEREAS, a study by the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research for Montana Kids Count indicated that in 2006, through no fault of their own, 8% of Montana's children were in extreme poverty in families at 50% of the federal poverty level; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that wealth in families goes beyond financial wealth but that lack of income in and of itself is associated with societal ills such as crime, a higher dropout rate, an inability to pursue an education that maximizes potential earnings, food insecurity, and an inability to access child care that allows single parents in particular to work at a full-time job with benefits; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature supports policies that empower not just the families shaken by current economic conditions but all those in long-term poverty and all Montana families and children who need tools that can build economic self-sufficiency and full participation in the Montana economy; and

WHEREAS, the current economic conditions and concerns about the future stability of Social Security benefits underscore the need for personal retirement savings so that all families have access to the so-called three-legged stool of retirement support: pensions, Social Security, and personal retirement or savings accounts; and

WHEREAS, better coordination of services among public, private, and nonprofit entities has the potential to expand resources used to boost family security in Montana and reduce poverty.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

1 That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee, pursuant to
2 section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to examine the tools that public and private partnerships
3 can provide to improve economic self-sufficiency, reviewing particularly policies related to:

4 (1) building family assets, including the use of individual development accounts to promote home
5 ownership, decrease debt, increase personal savings, and appropriately use and access credit;

6 (2) workforce development, including increased education, training, and retraining in combination with
7 economic development opportunities;

8 (3) state regulation of credit, lending, and credit counseling; and

9 (4) private, local, and state services or social support systems that provide a safety net for families not
10 yet able to build assets, retrain, or access credit of any kind.

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the study:

12 (1) examine ways to increase effective delivery of services to those in poverty;

13 (2) include input from representatives of: families receiving temporary assistance for needy families, food
14 banks, homeless shelters, veterans, senior citizens, tribal governments, day-care centers, banks, insurers, credit
15 unions, pay-day lenders, pawnshop owners, and credit counseling services; and

16 (3) include policy recommendations for the 62nd Legislature.

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be
18 presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review
20 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2010.

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,
22 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 62nd Legislature.

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